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SERMON

Preached before the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Sir JOHN SHORTER Knight,

Lord Mayor

OF THE

CITY of LONDON

AT

GROCCERS-HALL,

February the 12th 1688.

By Nathanael Taylor.

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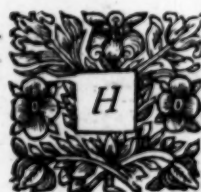
OF

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OF

To the Right Honourable
Sir JOHN SHORTER Knight,
Lord Mayor
OF THE
CITY of LONDON.

MY LORD,



AD I been at liberty to have followed my own Inclinations, the ensuing Discourse had been thrown by, and lain neglected in my own Study only. But having received your Commands for the Publishing as well as the Preaching of it, I here present it to your Lordship; being resolved there shall be no defects in my Obedience, how many soever there may be in my Sermon. But it's not the design of this Dedication to make Apologies, or which is another common place usually insisted on, write a Panegyric. They are generally Hypocrites that blow Trumpets before other Men, as well as

The Epistle Dedicatory.

they that of old did it before themselves. If you take care that your Works shall praise you, and your own Conscience approve and commend you; this will afford you a solid Satisfaction, when the good Words of Men only will no more comfort, than the Breath wherewith they utter them, will nourish you. And that your Lordship and your Honourable Brethren, may manage your Selves and all your Affairs in that Station wherein Providence hath set you, so as to secure this to your selves; prevent the Reproaches of Conscience, and live down those of malicious Men; that this great City and Religion may flourish under your prudent and just Administration, is and shall be the Daily Prayer of

MY LORD,

Your most Obedient

and Faithful Servant

Nathanael Taylor.

A
SERMON

Preached before the
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
Lord Mayor, &c.

LUKE X. 21.

In that Hour Jesus rejoyced in Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

HE that shall seriously consider the many express Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*; the great and incredible Diligence wherewith every Iota and Tittle of them was preserved; and the general Expectation among all

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Joh. 1. 11.

forts of men in *Judea* of his Coming and Kingdom, about our Saviour's Time; would be apt to think, that our Lord would have been as joyfully welcomed and entertained by them, as the first Approaches of the Sun are by those that have been buried in Darkness for many Months together in the remoter parts of the Earth: And that as he was usher'd into the World with the *Hallelujahs* of Angels, so he would have been received with the *Hosannas* of the Wilest of Men. But he that is in the least acquainted with the History of our Saviour, as recorded by all the Four Evangelists, will easily see, that tho he *came to his Own, yet his Own received him not*; and that tho when he went out of the World, the Dead indeed arose, as if they would present him with their Sepulchres; yet as for the Living, while he was in the World, they would not afford him a Place wherein to lay his Head. He had indeed approved himself to be a Teacher sent from God; for never did any Man speak the Words, or do the Things which he had done: and yet the Generality reject him, and especially the Sons of Wisdom and of Learning did most furiously oppose him. He opened the Eyes of the Blind, yet the Pharisees would not see the truth of his Doctrine. He cured the Dumb, but this was his Reward from the Scribes, he himself was spoken against. He unstopped the Ears of the Deaf, but yet the Rulers would not hear him: He removed the Diseases of their Bodies with greater ease than the Errors and Prejudices of their Minds. The *Spiritual Wickednesses* in those *high places* were the only Evil Ones that would not be subject to him. Nay, as if those raging Devils which he had cast out of others, had entred into them, they blaspheme and revile him; and their Doctors sate in the Chair of Scorners

Ephes. 6. 12.

Scorners as well as in the seat of *Moses*. Whilst they that followed him were few in number, mean and ignorant, despicable as well for their understanding, as for their quality. Both of which things were very popular prejudices, and mightily improved against him to discourage men from owning and submitting to him. But yet our Blessed Lord was so far from being dejected and troubled in mind at this, that on the contrary, as the Evangelist tells us in the words I have now read, *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, &c.* wherein we have these five things:

1. The inward motion of Christ's Soul, and the external effect or expression of it, *He rejoiced in spirit*; and such a passion must have some vent, makes him break silence, and with an audible voice *give thanks*.

2. The time when this happen'd, *In that hour*; which calls us to cast our eye back on the foregoing Verses. And therein we find our Saviour sending forth his Seventy Disciples to preach the Gospel, and giving them directions how to behave themselves towards those that receiv'd their Message, and those that rejected it. Then he upbraids and threatens the Cities of *Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum* for their impenitence under all those means of Grace which they enjoyed.

And immediately upon this St. *Matthew* brings in our Saviour uttering the same words with those in my Text. But St. *Luke*, that gives us an account of our Saviour's using these expressions at a different time from what St. *Matthew* speaks of, inserts an account of the return of the Seventy Disciples, and their being puffed up with the success of their Ministry, because not only, diseases but *Devils* themselves were sub-

Ver. 1.

From ver. 3, to 11.

From v. 12, to 16.

Mat. 11. 25, 26, V. 17.

V. 17

ject to them.

A Sermon Preached

V. 20.

Our Saviour hereupon corrects that carnal joy, and turns this wandering stream into its right channel, and directs them to rejoice in that which was a solid reason and foundation of joy, viz. because *their Names were written in Heaven*. And then he instructs them by his example, as he had done by his words; for seriously reflecting upon that scorn and contempt wherewith the Scribes and learned Pharisees rejected his Doctrine, and the meanness of them that embraced it; *in that hour he rejoiced in spirit*, for that revelation of Divine Mysteries that God had made unto them, which he denied unto others.

V. 22.

3. The subject matter or reason of Christ's joy and thanksgiving, *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes*.

These things] i.e. the knowledg of thy self and me, (which he mentions in the next Verse) and those Mysteries of thy Kingdom which I have declared, and on which eternal salvation doth depend.

Thou hast [hid] from some, [revealed] to others. By considering the latter of these words we shall the better understand the former of them. *Thou hast revealed them*] He doth not speak of an external revelation; for that was not the peculiar privilege of some few only, Christ having preached them publicly and plainly in the ears of all the people; but of an internal revelation, enabling them in a spiritual and practical manner to apprehend those Divine Truths that were outwardly proposed to them. And consequently by the *hiding* these things from others, we must understand the denying them that special Grace which might open their minds to see the glory of Divine Mysteries, and their hearts to feel the transforming

forming power of them; leaving them to their own obstinate wilful ignorance, to the lusts of their own hearts, and the power of Satan to blind and harden them.

Thou hast hid these things *from the Wise and Prudent.*] Men of great Parts, worldly Wisdom, humane Learning, such as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were. And revealed them to *Babes*. The word properly signifies those that are young in years; but being opposed to the Wise and Prudent, must be understood of those that are, as young Children use to be, weak in understanding; as Christ's Disciples were.

4. The notion under which Christ directs his thanksgiving to his Father for this thing; that of *Lord of Heaven and Earth*; which is a title very suitable to the matter insisted on, and denotes his absolute Dominion, and his infinite Power. *q. d.* It was not for want of ability, or of right, that thou hast not done otherwise. Thou didst act like one who hadst all power in thy hand, in thus revealing these thy Mysteries unto Babes; and by the same Almighty Power couldst have shined into the hearts of the Wise and Prudent, who are thy Creatures also. But thou art at liberty to chuse or pass by according as seems good in thy own eyes.

5. Christ's approbation of, and acquiescence in this dispensation, on this account, because it was the gracious pleasure of God. *Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

From the words thus open'd, many Doctrines might be raised; but I shall take notice of one only.

Doct. *The saving revelation of divine things is usually bestowed on mean and inferior persons, and denied*

A Sermon Preached

nied to the wise and prudent that enjoy the same outward means with them.

In the handling this Doctrine I shall

- I. Explain and confirm this Truth.
- II. Shew upon what account this was matter of joy and thanksgiving unto Christ.
- III. Apply all.

I. I shall explain and confirm this Truth. And here

I. As to a notional Knowledge, Divine things are so far from being hid from the Wise and Prudent, that they are more fully understood by them than any of these weaker ones. Daily experience shews us, there are many of the *Disputers of this World* that have a more exact scheme of Divine Truths in their heads, than thousands of holy Souls. They have such an understanding of Divine Matters, as they have of Humane Arts and Sciences: Can talk accurately and learnedly about them to the reviving the hearts of some, and stopping the mouths of others. Tho indeed the great things of God and Christ, the Precepts, Promises, and Threatnings of the Word, have not that sound in their ears, nor that holy influence on their hearts and lives as they have on many inferior persons. They do not see them with life and affection, they do not tast the sweetness, nor feel the power of them; they have not the relish and savour of them ~~on~~ their spirits. They do not receive them with respect and veneration; with that love, delight and holy obedience, as those of weaker capacities do. All the knowledg that is in them, is but like those Lamps that have been discover'd in some Tombs; still there are dead bones, stench and rottenness within, and there the Carcase lies dead and unactive in

in the very same place and posture, notwithstanding all that light that surrounds it.

2. *Wisdom and Prudence do not in themselves obstruct the saving revelation of Divine Things, nor doth the want of them qualify any for the receiving it.* Humane Wisdom and Learning are the Gifts of God, and the proper ornaments of our rational Faculties; like a crown of flame to a burning Taper. And therefore so far are such excellent qualifications from hindring any in their own nature from an hearty embracing Christianity, that if we consider how plainly the Doctrines of the Gospel are revealed; how undeniably they are proved to be from Heaven; how excellently suited to the distressed state of an Apostate World; with what exquisite Wisdom the whole is contriv'd to the admiration of all the glorious Angels; how reasonable its commands are, how glorious its promises, how terrible its threatnings; 'tis a very amazing thing that men of parts and abilities to weigh and consider things, and discern their own Interest, should not readily entertain them. These noble things are not obstructions to it *in themselves*; but those lusts, and that pride that too generally accompany them, like rust cleaving unto silver and gold.

Nor doth the want of these qualify any man for saving Knowledge. Nay, on the contrary, it renders men naturally more unapt and incapable, as well as more unworthy of it. As the Woman of Samaria said to our Saviour, *the Well is deep*; and the shorter the line is, so much the more unlikely it is in it self to reach to the bottom for the drawing up of living Waters. If any have the advantage, it should be men of quick parts: for such generally take a thing presently, as spirits immediately catch fire; whereas things do

do not enter so easily, nor pierce so deeply into those that are naturally dull and slow of understanding. If *the Iron be blunt*, much pains must be taken in *whetting the edge*, or more *strength put forth* in the using it.

Eccl. 10. 10.

3. *The saving knowledge of Divine things is not denied to all that are wise and prudent, nor given to all inferior Persons.* Some renowned for wisdom and learning, have been of Christ's Retinue. Some curiously carved Pieces have been in our Father's House that have exceedingly grac'd and adorn'd it. Sacred Records inform us of *Joseph of Arimathæa*, a rich man, and an honourable Councillour; of *Nicodemus* a Master in Israel; of *Sergius Paulus* a prudent man; of a profoundly learned *Paul*; an eloquent *Apollos*; and in the succeeding Ages there have been some others of a great name, that have *known the truth as it is in Jesus*. Some that have had the advantage of the higher ground, have breath'd in a clear Air, and been refresh'd with the beams of the Sun; while more inconsiderable Persons, like them that dwell in low and marish Grounds, have been wrapt up in fogs and thick darkness. The very dust of the Earth, being rais'd by the Prince of the Air, flew in Christ's face; the common people, I mean among the *Jews*, who cried out Crucify him, which they would no more have done than their Rulers, had they *known the Lord of Glory*.

Acts 13. 7.

Eph. 4. 21.

1 Cor. 2. 8.

4. *The saving knowledge of Divine things is most usually given to inferior persons; and most commonly denied to those that are wise and prudent.* The Temple at *Jerusalem* was made of the richest and most costly Materials; the spiritual Temple generally of the meanest, only here and there a few precious and polished Stones that set off the whole Building. And the truth of this will appear, if you consider,

1. How

1. *How matters stood about the time of our Saviour's appearing, and while he continued in the World.*

Learning and Policy were then at the highest. But yet the wise Philosophers were lost in the fog; and by *wisdom the World knew not God.* Like the blinded *Sodomites*, they were groping after the *dore* of Knowledge and Eternal Life, when the Day-star was just rising, but were not able to find it. If we leave them, and pass into the dwellings of the Children of *Israel*, who were now the *Goshen* of the World, as they had been once of *Egypt*, we shall find them encompassed with palpable darkness. The most understanding men want an eye to see. One would have thought, that as the light of the morning strikes first on the tops of the High Mountains, so the *dawning* of the day of Christ should have been first perceived by the High Priests. That the Sanhedrin should have had the most early notice of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, as they used to have of the *Phasis* of the New Moon. But on the contrary, the first tidings of an approaching *Messiah* were given to *Zechariah*, an ordinary Priest of the course of *Abias*; to *Elizabeth* his Wife, to the Babe in her Womb, to *Joseph* the Carpenter, and *Mary* a despised Virgin, of a Royal Family, but run to decay, and sunk like a dry root under ground. True indeed, *three Wise men* of the *East* were inform'd of Christ's *Nativity* by a *new Star*; but a more considerable number of *poor Shepherds* had it from a higher hand; one of the noble Order of Angels, those *Morning Stars*, was their Preacher. And one Messenger did not suffice; there was besides a *great multitude* of the *Heavenly Host*, who in their hearing sung a Psalm of Praise at the close of the Angelical Sermon. The Wise-men understood the matter but darkly and confusedly,

Mat. 2. 1, 2.

Luke 2. 8.

V. 13.

V. 11.

*Lightfoot's
Works, Vol. 1.
p. 432.*

V. 16.

V. 25.

V. 36.

somewhat in the general, which left them under much perplexity and uncertainty, and caused them to resort to *Jerusalem* to make a farther enquiry. But the poor Shepherds are told all very plainly, both as to the Nature and Office of Christ; that he was a *Saviour*, and the *Lord*: And as to the particular circumstances of Time and Place, *this day*, and in *the City of David*. It was several days to be sure; nay, whatever *Baronius* saith to the contrary, for the credit of the *Roman Calender*, a learned Man on good ground thinks, *above a year* before the Wise-men could obtain a sight of Christ. But the Shepherds find him the very *next morning*, and don't wait so long for admission into his Royal Presence, as the others did.

When our Saviour was brought into the Temple, the learned *Scribes* and *Pharisees* knew him no more than Subjects do their Prince when under a disguise. Only two aged persons, *Simeon* (who in all probability was not the famous Man of that name, the Son of *Hillel* and Father of *Gamaliel*, President of the great Sanhedrin, as some imagine) and *Anna* the Prophetess of the Tribe of *Asser*, that was always mean, and much more so since the Captivity; persons remarkable for nothing so much as their extraordinary Piety, by which the Holy Ghost describes them, discern who he is; the one opening his Arms to receive him, and both of them their Mouths to praise God for him. Afterwards Christ was removed from *Bethlehem*, as tho that were a place too near the great Doctors in *Jerusalem*, and *Nazareth* an obscure corner of the Country was the place of his usual residence. *Lazarus*, *Martha*, *Mary*, persons of no extraordinary quality, were his intimate Friends. Not Princes or Rabbies, but a Publican and Fisher-men were chosen his Disciples. The learned Men indeed were

were sometimes his Hearers; but they revile, oppose, undervalue, endeavour to ensnare and murder him, while the *Poor* only receive the Gospel. He blesses little Children, and they are the persons that sing Hallelujahs to him. He instructs a poor Woman of *Samaritan* in the Mysteries of Salvation in a long and excellent Discourse, tho she seemed to deny him a draught of water. But as for King *Herod*, who had long desired to see him, and if gratified, might have preserved his Life, he could not get a word from Christ, tho he hoped for a Miracle. There was not a greater darkness on the face of the Earth, in the time of Christ's Passion, than there was upon the Understandings of *Pilate*, the Chief Priests and Elders. Christ communicates a saving-light and knowledg of himself to a poor condemned Thief that hung by him on the Cross, and opens his Eyes that were ready to be closed by Death, while those of the Rulers that were almost as near him, were *holden that they could not know him*. Mat. 11. 5.
John 4.
Luke 23. 8.
Luke 24. 16.

2. *Things ran in the same channel in the Apostles days, and the succeeding Age.* At *Athens*, the eye of the World, when *Paul* preached Jesus and the Resurrection, he was reviled as a Babblers, disputed against by two Sects of Philosophers; dragg'd before the great Judicatory at *Mars's Hill*: And tho the Judges there were remarkable for their * number and quality, being the most famous men in all *Greece* for Wisdom and Morality, yet it could not be small, because nine of their *Archontes* that had ruled well for one year, were annually chosen into that Society. It must therefore be a great mistake of those that say they were no more than 9, or 31, or 51. *Diogenes Laertius* tells us that there were 281 of them that condemned *Socrates*, besides those that acquitted him; who, as *Plato* in his *Apology* affirms, were as many, wanting three only. And *Diog. Laertius* informs us, that no less than 80 of those that gave sentence in favour of him, afterwards changed their minds; so that at least, there were no less than 361. that voted against him. Vide *Meursi Arcopag.* p. 32.

lity, yet we find but one of them, viz. *Dionysius* converted to the Christian Faith. The heart of *Lydia* that *sold purple*, was open'd, while *Felix's* that wore it was only terrified. And tho both he, and King *Agrippa*, and *Bernice*, and *Festus* heard *Paul* reasoning about Righteousness, and Temperance, and Judgment to come, yet he that went farthest among them was but *almost persuaded to be a Christian*. And what the success of his Labours generally was, he himself tells us;

Acts 16. 14. *not many wise men after the flesh were called.*

Acts 26. 28.

1 Cor. 1. 26.

3. *The great things of the Gospel, and the sacred Records of Christianity, are not suited to the Genius of these wise and prudent ones, nor penn'd so as to gratifie their vanity.* So far are the Apostles, like some Modern Missionaries in the remoter parts of the world, from drawing a veil upon those Articles of the Christian Doctrine that seem most naked, and where it lies most open and exposed to shame and reproach, that that part of it, a Crucified Saviour, they mainly insist on in their Sermons and Writings, and magnifie as the highest instance of Divine Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice and Goodness, and require all men heartily to own it as such. They *openly triumph in the Cross* of Christ, as he did upon it; a thing which the wise men of this world have scorned in all ages as the greatest weakness and folly. The Truths, as well as the Laws of Christianity tend to promote Holiness, and are not accommodated to the evil inclinations of Mankind, as a Garment shaped so as to humour the body of a crooked person. The Sacred Pen-men are peculiarly severe against those sins that men are most in love withal. They blow on all humane wisdom and learning, that they may blast the glory of it; and the whole of our Religion is so contrived, as to suffer men

men to glory in nothing but this, that they know the *Jer. 9. 24.*

Lord. Had the Holy Scriptures been penn'd in an exact method according to the rules of humane art ; had they been adorned with all the beauties of style and expression ; had they transmitted to us the secret intrigues of Princes, the Politick Maxims of States, or a more accurate History of the flourishing Empires of the world, than all the Prophane Authors have done: Had *Paul*, when he came down from the Third Heavens, discoursed of the Hierarchy of Angels, and their several Orders; had his Language been as high as his rapture, these men would have read and studied him with a mighty relish. But here's not *Cicero's* Rhetorick for an *Austin*, nor sublime Metaphysical subtilties for a profound *Bradwardine*. The Mantles which these *Elijahs* dropt and left behind them when they went to Heaven, are not so finely wrought, nor so curiously embroider'd as they would have had them, nor of such a fashion as pleases them. The main scope of them is nakedly to relate matters of fact concerning an obscure Person, one Jesus, who was dead, but they affirm to be alive ; propose many surprizing and stupendous Mysteries, and lay down very strict and severe rules that concern all alike. They don't run out into high useles speculations , nor stand on Mathematical Certainty, but press all on the naked authority of God, which these men think below them to bow and submit themselves unto. And all this in such a manner, that tho'tis plain enough to men that are vertuous and humble, that they are from God; yet not so plain as to hinder vain, proud, Atheistical and captious men from starting many Objections against them, and stumbling at them. And therefore all Ages have had but too much reason to complain as they did

of

of old, that unlearned men rise up and take Heaven by violence, while great Scholars sink down into Hell, live in spiritual darkness, and pass into that which is eternal.

II. Well, but tho this be true as to matter of fact, is not this a mighty reproach and scandal to Christ and Religion? Had it not been more for his honour and interest to have had the *wise and prudent* ones on his side? Or however, seeing it hath pleased God to take a contrary course, had it not been enough patiently to have born this, to have considered it with calmness and submission? Would it not have been more suitable to his tenderness, and mighty concern for the welfare of Mankind, to have turn'd his eyes towards these men with all the expressions of sorrow, rather than to have lifted them up towards Heaven with all the signs of delight? What reason is here for joy and thanksgiving, considering either the thing it self, hiding from men the things that belong to their eternal peace; or the *person* spoken of? What! the blessed *Jesus*, the great Lover and Saviour of men! One would have thought he should rather have lifted up his voice, and have wept upon this occasion, and as he did on the death of *Lazarus*, have groaned rather than rejoiced in spirit.

And here Saint *Chrysostom*'s answer will not help us out, *viz.* that this joy and thanksgiving of Christ doth not refer to the *former*, the *hiding these things from the wise and prudent*; but to the latter Clause only, the *revealing of them unto babes*. And so he parallels it with that place of the Apostle, *Rom. 6. 17.* *God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of Doctrine which was deliver'd to you.* Where St. Paul can't be supposed to thank God but for the latter only; *q. d.* Tho you were

were once the slaves of sin, yet now I praise my God that you are become the Lord's Free-men.

But there is a mighty difference between these two Scriptures. For the Apostle doth not in that place ascribe their being the servants of sin unto God as the *Author* of it, as our Saviour in my Text doth the hiding of these things from the wise and prudent, *Thou hast hid them.* Moral evils come not from God, but *penal* and *judicial* ones of this nature are frequently ascribed to him as his *marvellous* acts. That tremendous Prophetical threatening of his *making the heart of a rebellious people fat, and shutting their eyes lest they should see,* &c. is repeated no less than six times in the New Testament. God as a Sovereign and a Righteous Judge denies or withdraws his Grace when a people have a long time sinned against the light with a high hand, leaves them to themselves, and delivers them up to the will of Satan, who blinds their eyes, and hardens their hearts. Isa. 29. 14.
Isa. 6. 10.

The true answer therefore is this, That tho the blinding of any men consider'd *nakedly in it self*, and as they are rational Creatures made after the Image of God, and capable of eternal happiness, is matter of great sorrow; yet Christ being a true Man, and filled with quick and lively affections to God and his Glory, doth rejoice and give thanks for the hiding these things from the wise and prudent, as well as for revealing them to men of weaker capacities, as such a dispensation in both the branches of it tends to the displaying and glorifying the Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Power and Sovereignty of his Father: For all these are magnified herein. And,

1. Christ rejoices and gives thanks because such a dispensation *makes exceedingly for the honour of his*
*
Wisdom

Wisdom and Goodness : See this in four things.

1. *This tends to destroy pride, and advance the honour of his free Grace in the eyes of all whom he teaches and saves.* And 'tis highly reasonable that this should be done, considering the first rise of our misery, as well as the greatness of it. *You shall be like Gods*, was the prevailing temptation that ruin'd man. It was requisite that he who had totally undone himself by aspiring, and bold attempts to exalt himself, should be greatly debased and humbled, and God alone be honoured in the very way of his recovery. That that evil Humour that had caused his Sickness should be purged out, and a contrary quality infused into him in order to the restoring of his Health. 'Tis agreeable to the Eternal Reason of things, that so vile a Criminal should be brought on his knees, laid in the dust, in the lowest posture imaginable, in order to the receiving so high an act of Grace. That such extremely miserable Wretches, and yet such haughty, swelling and lofty Creatures too, should have those proud looks of theirs taken down, that first brought them into, and still accompanied them in that most deplorable state. Now this God hath most effectually provided for by such a dispensation as we are now treating of: And if the Apostle may be believed, it was his great design therein. He hath *not called many wise men after the flesh, but hath chosen the foolish and the weak things of the World, that no flesh might glory in his presence; but that whosoever glorieth, should glory in the Lord alone.* Had God taken a contrary method, boasting had not been excluded. For natural and acquired Parts, when alone, are exceeding apt to puff up. Much more would men be prone to be exalted in their own eyes, if special Grace also, like a Crown of Gold,

1 Cor. I. 25,
31.

Gold, were commonly put upon these mens Heads. And on the other hand, even those that have renewing Grace only, and little or nothing besides to recommend them, yet are apt to swell : which is so evident, that the Men of the World take notice of it, there being no sin which they are more ready to reproach the Generation of the Righteous withal, than *spiritual pride*, except it be *hypocrisie*. And in truth this Worm is apt to breed even in this Mannah that comes down from Heaven, not from the nature of the Grace it self, but from the corruption of those Vessels wherein 'tis put : How much more were saving-knowledge given to men of refined parts, would they be prone to be lifted up, and not ascribe all with that lowliness of mind that becomes them to the free grace of God alone. Instead of admiring him, they would be applauding themselves. They and others too would be tempted to ascribe all to their own excellency and deserts. It would be thought that a spiritual understanding of divine things was not the effect of God's teaching, but of the strength of their own wit and labour. That this choice Plant, like the Fruits of the Field in the beginning of the World, did spring out of the ground, and did thrive and flourish, not by the rain falling down from Heaven, but by vertue of that *mist that went up from the Earth* it self. But now God clearly confutes any such vain imaginations, and openly proclaims that none of these excellencies were motives to him. Seeing he passes by the great ones of the World, who, by reason of their noble qualifications, appear beautiful in our eyes, as *Eliab* did in *Samuel's*, and will not pour out the *Unction of the Holy One that teacheth all things*, on their heads and hearts (as the Prophet would not the anointing Oil on *Eliab*)

Gen. 2. 5, 6.

1 John 2. 20.

D

but

but generally on the meanest of all the people, he *stains the glory of man*, and plainly declares, to the silencing and humbling of all Flesh, the absolute freeness of the unsearchable riches of the glory of his own Grace.

2. By such a dispensation God *pours contempt and scorn on that wisdom for which his Enemies so much despise him, and magnify themselves*. Men of great abilities are apt to have the same extravagant fancy concerning themselves, as that blind Man whose Eyes were half-open'd, had of other men, that they walk *like Trees*, far above the ordinary height and stature of Mankind. And they look down with scorn on the ways of Christ, and upon his Followers as a *rabble of fools and mad men*. But what a mortification may it well be to these men now, and will it certainly be at the last day, to see those very Persons, whom they thus despise, crown'd with eternal glory, to which their own so much admired wisdom was so far from advancing them, that it rather help'd, like bags of gold about a drowning man, to plunge them the deeper into Hell! The flames of that infernal Pit shall at once manifest their folly, and punish it; and the darkness thereof shall not be their only covering; for this very thing shall spread an eternal shame and confusion upon their Souls. Like those of old they count *the Table of the Lord contemptible, and the meat*, and those that sit and eat thereof. *Therefore will the Lord also make them contemptible and base before all his people* in the general assembly of his first-born. How will they then be forced to say, We fools thought their life madness, but now it appears that ours was so; and surely these are the only wise and understanding people.

3. The Wisdom of God is seen herein, *in bringing*
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such

Mark 8 24.

Mal. 1. 7.

Mal. 2. 9.

such weak Persons safely to Heaven, and carrying on his interest in the World by them. 'Tis certainly an argument of great wisdom so to order matters, as by little contemptible things to overcome strong ones. Now God suffers Satan to have almost all the advantages that he could desire. He is a very subtil Spirit; and generally all the policy of Earth, as well as of Hell, is on his side for the strengthening of his Party. And how unequal a match are the poor weak Followers of Christ to cope and grapple with such Enemies whose policy is so much superiour to theirs? How unlikely is it to an eye of sense and reason that these men should in spight of all, bear up Christ's name, propagate his interest, drive on his great Counsels in the World, send others to Heaven, and at last safely reach it themselves? It is one great argument that our Religion is of God, that it was propagated by such feeble Instruments; against such mighty Enemies as the Philosophers and Princes of this World; and the *sweet savour of the knowledg of a crucified Jesus* ^{2 Cor. 2. 14, 15.} was diffused every-where, not like the Spices of *Arabia* upon the wings of the Wind, but against a furious one that arose from every corner of the Earth. The skill of a Commander is very much discover'd in securing the retreat of a few feeble and raw men, during a long march, quite through the Enemies Country, while a powerful and well-disciplin'd Army, under the conduct of a Politick General, hovers about them, watching all advantages to defeat them; but 'tis much more for his honour if he brings them off with victory. When by the *mouths of babes and sucklings* God not only *stills the enemy and the avenger*, but conquers him too; he *perfects the praises* of his own Power and Wisdom. ^{Psalms 8. 2.}

A Sermon Preached

4. The Wisdom and Goodness of God is shewn herein, because *hereby he prevents the meanest of his Creatures being discouraged from seeking after saving-knowledge.* Whatever the proud Sinners that are at ease in Sion, may imagin, yet to a poor convinced Soul that hath a lively view of the Divine Majesty and Greatness, it seems almost incredible that ever the King of Kings should stoop so much below himself, as to cast a favourable eye on such a *Flea*, such a *dead Dog* as he: who is sensible, not only that he hath been the greatest of Sinners, but is one of the meanest of Men; and whose abilities are so small, or rather none, that he can signify no more to the advancing his Interest, than the very dust of the balance to the turning of the Scales. We naturally think God is *altogether such a one as our selves*; that we must have some good qualities to recommend us to his favour, as well as to that of men. None of us will trade to barren Countries; and we fancy there can be no commerce between us and Heaven, unless there be some excellency of our own native growth to invite and encourage it. But now by this Dispensation God shews on the contrary, how much he values the precious Souls of the lowest of his Creatures. That he doth not do by the Treasures of his Wisdom and Knowledge as Princes do by those of their Earthly Substance, lock them up from vulgar eyes; but is ready to open his arms and his heart to those that humbly sit at his feet, and are willing to learn of him, how mean soever their state and condition may be. So much for the Wisdom of God.

1 Sam. 24. 14.

Ps. 50. 21.

II. Christ rejoices and gives thanks, because *the hiding these things from the wise and prudent is an act of*
of

of high justice in God. And that upon these three following accounts.

1. *Such men do despise and reject the Mysteries of the Gospel.* Tho there are many things in Nature which they cannot understand, and dare not deny; yet they are exceeding nice and tender about Mysteries in matters of Religion. 'Tis below men of their refined parts and piercing intellectuals, to assent to any thing which they cannot grasp; 'tis for Children to swallow Physick which they do not understand. They are subtil to evade the force of the strongest Arguments, start many plausible Objections against the plainest truths, which weaker heads never dream of; smart and witty to represent them as contemptible and ridiculous. The barren Sands cannot send up so many vapours to keep off the light of the Sun, as the richer and fatter Soil does. These are the Men that above all others have many high and proud thoughts, and vain imaginations, exalting themselves in their Souls against the knowledge of the Gospel, and will not be brought into captivity to the obedience of ^{2 Cor. 10.4,5.} Christ.

2. *With the greatest scorn they refuse the grand condition of the Gospel-Covenant.* To rely on Christ alone for Salvation, when they have so many rare things of their own to depend on: to stand begging at another's dore, and with deep humility and brokenness of heart to sue for pardon and salvation meerly from the Mercy of God, and the Merits of a Redeemer, 'tis such a mortification as their high Spirits can by no means endure to think or hear of. Like foolish Children, they have the advantage of the ground, and therefore think themselves taller, their heads touch the Clouds, and are nearer Heaven
than

A Sermon Preached

than others. To lye at the foot of a Crucified Saviour, they judge a posture more suitable for those vile ones of the Earth that are not raised up out of the dust; but as for them, they will never be brought to it, till like *Paul*, they are *struck down to the ground*. And even then too generally, when they are convinced of their sins, and pained at the heart about them, they choose any other way to the Father; and if they find themselves under a necessity of returning to God, they will rather do it in their own names, than his: And this is the spring of all that *Theism* that begins to spread so much among these men in our days. To look on all they have done, or can do, as *drofs and dung*; to lay aside their own wisdom and prudence, for which they are so highly valued both by themselves and others; to be justified by the Righteousness of another; to rejoice in *Christ Jesus*, having no confidence in the flesh; to be ruled and saved by him alone, 'tis not a thing suitable to the greatness of their minds. They would fain be doing somewhat that should distinguish them from the dregs of the people, and recommend them to the Divine favour and acceptance. They are not more desirous that their own Wills should be their Lord's, than that the Works of their own hands should be their Saviour's. They bear up themselves on empty Bladders, fill'd with nothing but wind, and despise that Ark of God's building, wherein alone they can avoid sinking in the storms of Divine Wrath and vengeance: and tho glorified Saints in Heaven above, *cast their Crowns at Christ's feet*, yet these haughty Sinners here below scornfully refuse to do it.

Phil. 3. 3.

Rev. 4. 10.

3. They desperately hate the great duties of holiness. That first and fundamental thing which is required as prepa-

preparatory to our learning of Christ, the renouncing our own Understandings, and becoming as *little Children*; the mortifying of our beloved Lusts, crucifying the Flesh with all its affections, purifying the Heart, loving our Enemies, denying our selves, taking up the Cross, and suffering the loss of all things, even their darling Reputation; These are hard sayings, against which their hearts exceedingly rise within them, as a man's blood would do at the sight of one that would murder his dearest Friend. And when at any time any serious thoughts are flash'd into their minds, they run through their Souls like lightning through the Air, which never warms it, and quickly vanishes. They close their eyes, turn away their faces; 'tis the language of their hearts and lives, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of these ways.* They love and cherish darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Righteous therefore art thou, O Lord, just and true are thy Judgments, O thou God of all Grace, when thou sufferest the God of this World to blind the minds of these men, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ may not shine into their hearts. Mat. 18. 3.
Job 21. 14.
John 3. 19.
2 Cor. 4. 4.

3. Christ rejoices in, and gives thanks for such a Dispensation, because the power of God is magnified herein. He shews himself to be the mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth, in revealing these things unto Babes. In making the simple wise unto salvation, elevating their weak Understandings to a saving apprehension of those matters, which the wisest and most learned of themselves are not capable of attaining unto; He shews the power of his own grace to be far above the force of Nature when raised to its highest pitch

- pitch and glory. When he makes things that *are not*, do more than things that *are*; enables them that have not Logick enough to perceive the force of an argument in other matters, yet understand the *demonstration of the Spirit*, which the most learned *cannot know because 'tis spiritually discern'd*; those that can't search into the vulgar Subjects of Philosophy, much less into the abstruser parts of it, see into the profound depths of the Divine Wisdom; those whose discourses on all other Arguments are weak and trifling, yet can speak of God, Christ, Heaven, and the great things of the Gospel in such an admirable manner, that the best Scholars may not only be astonisht at them as the Rulers were when *they perceived Peter and John were ignorant and unlearned men*; but be instructed by them too, as *Priscilla*, the Wife of a poor Tent-maker, *expounded the way of the Lord more perfectly to an Eloquent Apollos*. Those that are not able to dive into the cunning Intrigues of States-men, shall pierce into the infinitely deeper Counsels of God's Will: Those that can't manage the Affairs of this life with common discretion, but are easily over-reach'd by their Neighbours in every business, yet are *not ignorant of Satan's devices*, nor entangled by the cunning craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive them to their eternal ruine: Those that are dull and heavy in other matters, yet are *of a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, and *tho fools*, yet *they err not in the way of holiness*, in which the *unclean*, tho never so knowing, *cannot pass*: He that doth these things, declares himself to be a God that worketh wonders.

Behold

Behold, God exalteth himself by his Power; who teacheth like him, that makes dull Scholars understand in writing, by his Hand upon them, how to perform those Duties and excel in those Graces, which the greatest Men of this World can't so much as know what to make of, much less can they imitate? To be humble in Prosperity, to live by Faith in Adversity; for a Brother of high Degree to rejoyce when he is brought low, as much as other Men when they are raised up; to love the most bitter Enemies, and hate the dearest Friends and Relations; when there is no fruit in their Vines, yet to sit chearfully under their Shadow, rejoycing in the Lord, and joying in the God of their Salvation; to set their Affections on things above, while they are here below; have their Conversation in Heaven, while they dwell on Earth; to be killed all the day long, and yet believe their Life is hid with Christ in God, where their Enemies Swords can't reach them; to be diligent in their Callings, and yet careful for nothing; to bear Burdens, and yet cast them all upon God; carefully to preserve their Lives, and yet hate them too, and desire Death, longing to depart and be with Christ; to be meek under Reproach and Injury; when smitten on the one Cheek to turn, not to requite the Affront, but offer the other also to the same Indignity: In a word, to live by the Spirit, walk by the Strength, do the Will and design the Glory, not of themselves, but of another whom they never saw, yet they love, in whom tho now they see him not, yet they believe, and rejoyce, and that sometimes with joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

These are things which God by his teaching enables many simple Men to do; things that the Wise and Prudent can't so much as understand, but gaze and wonder at them as if they were not only Mysteries and Riddles, but Impossibilities and Contradictions; when they hear us mention them, we are *Barbarians* to them, and speak a Language which they know not. He that doth all this, teaches with a wonderful Authority and a mighty Power.

Luke 4. 25.

v. 29

Exod. 33. 19.

Rom. 9. 16.

Titus 3. 5.

4. Christ rejoyces and gives thanks, because in such a Dispensation the *Sovereignty of God is declared*. This is an Attribute that Men do not much care to hear of, as if it were like those Flourishes and Pictures that we see in Maps, placed there to fill up some void room, but of no real use. And 'tis very remarkable, that for preaching this very Doctrin of the Sovereignty of God in the free distribution of his special Favours, without any regard to human Worth or Excellency; Christ himself was in danger of being *murther'd*. For when he discoursed to the Men of *Nazareth* about *one* only Widow and she of *Sarepta*, fed by *Elijah*; and *one Naaman*, and he a *Syrian* too, cured by him; there being many Widows and Lepers, and they in *Israel* also, who were passed by, tho they might (one would have thought) have pretended a better Title to such a Favour, than these uncircumcised Gentiles; the Men of the place were filled with Indignation against a Preacher of such Doctrin, and endeavoured to cast him down headlong from the brow of the Hill. But vain Men may think as they please; this is one Letter of Gods Name which he himself did not leave out when he proclaimed it, and caused his Glory and Goodness to pass before *Moses*; *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious*. Christ himself, in my Text, rises up as high as this Well-head, and acquiesces in this *even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. And hither must we resort for Satisfaction; and here must we rest at last. If a Reason be asked of any Person, absolutely consider'd, Why is God savingly made known unto him? It do's not savour of Evangelical Humility nor a Gospel Spirit, to say, Because he was more worthy, or (as some mince the matter) because he was less unworthy: The Scripture answer is, *'Tis not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*; according to his meer Mercy and Grace, and not for any Works of Righteousness which he hath done. If the Question be asked of any one absolutely consider'd, Why
are

are not Gospel Truths savingly made known to him? 'Tis a Truth that will stop his Mouth; and his own Conscience will attest it, by sinning against natural Light and common Grace, he hath deserved it, and there is no unrighteousness in God. But now take them comparatively, and if you ask, Why doth God reveal Divine Mysteries to two or three wise Men only in an Age, and not to the rest? Why to *Paul* the Scholar, whom tho (as *Festus* imagined) much Learning had not made mad, yet Rage against the Gospel made him exceedingly so; and not to *Gamaliel* the Master, a moderate and sober Man that gave very gentle Counsel in favour of the first Preachers of Christianity, and was *in great Reputation among all the People*? Or if you ask, Why should God pass by the generality of wise Men, pitch his Love upon, and give his saving Grace unto inferiour Persons for the most part? What, could he not have torn off the Veil from the Heart of the one as well as of the other? Was not the *refidue of the Spirit with him*? Yes surely, for he is *Lord of Heaven and Earth*, and hath all Power and all Hearts in his Hands. He could have made the Dews of his saving Grace, as Universal as the Drops of the Morning. He could have made his Ministers have blown the Gospel Trumpet with such a Breath, made it give so loud a sound, that like the last Trump at the Mouth of an Angel, it should have awakened all that are dead in Trespases and Sins, and made them to revive. Why therefore hath he not done it? If you answer, he shews his Power, Wisdom and Justice, in leaving them under spiritual Darkness; it may be replied, these very Attributes of Wisdom and Power, besides that of his infinite Goodness he might have glorified the other way; and his Justice had a large Field to display it self in the punishment of Apostate Angels. Why therefore hath he not done it? You must Center in this at last, because his Grace is free; he is *debtor to no Man*; he doth with his own what seemeth good in his own Eyes; he fashions the same Lump of

Acts 26. 24.

Acts 5. 34.

Mal. 2. 15.

Rom. 9. 20, 21.

filthy and untemper'd *Clay* into what Vessels he pleases. And who art thou, O Man! that darest to dispute or reply against thy Maker? Be still, O proud Dust! and know that he is God, and a great King over all the Earth. Bowels of Mercy made the Motion at first; the Eye of Wisdom directed the Management of the whole; the right Hand of Power was there to assist; Justice did not open its Mouth to contradict; and Sovereignty (as it became that Attribute,) sat upon a glorious high Throne, far above all the Heavens, and from all Eternity selected the particular Persons, whom according to the Counsel of its own Will, it resolved should be infallibly brought to Salvation through the knowledge and belief of the Truth,

III. In the last place I shall briefly apply all.

1. By way of Information in six Things.

1. Hence learn, 'tis no great wonder there are so many Follies, Weaknesses and Miscarriages, among the sincere followers of Christ. They are a plain, simple, illiterate sort of People, for the most part, that mind the Power of Religion, and but few of the prudent Ones of this World among them. And therefore, tho they are wise as to the main, in as much as they avoid the greatest Dangers, and secure their biggest Interest; yet it can't be expected they should manage themselves and all their Affairs, according to the exact Rules of human Policy, which they generally want; and 'tis not strange, if in many single instances of a lower nature, they frequently mistake their VVay, and take many a false Step. A Mariner may have so much skill in Sea Affairs, as to be able to steer his Ship thro' the main Ocean, and make a good Voyage even to the *Indies*, escaping the great Rocks and mighty Sands; and yet not know the way into a particular Port, so well as an ordinary Pilot of the place, but be apt (thro' mistake) to run his Vessel a-ground, where it may receive great Damage, and be very difficultly brought off again.

2. See

2. See one reason, why the ablest Ministers are seldom so successful in their Work as those that are more meanly furnish'd. Like Canon mounted too high, they shoot over the Heads of inferiour Persons, whom generally God hath ordained to eternal Life; and so they beat the Air, but batter down no strong Holds; and are qualified to deal with the wise and more rational part of Mankind, among whom God hath not much People, nor Christ many Sheep. The most Sovereign Remedies prepared according to Art, shall have no Success, when Clay and Spittle (if Christ will but use it) shall restore Sight to those blind Creatures, on whom he hath resolved the Works of God shall be made manifest. John 9. 6.
v. 3.

3. See the Vanity of that Objection against serious Religion, drawn from the meanness of those that sincerely embrace it, when the far greatest part of the famous Men are on the other side. This is an old Engine of the Devils, Have any of the Rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? The weakness of this Argument appears from what hath been said: And indeed, if it be of any force against a sincere embracing of Christs ways, it will hold good against the practice of common Morality. For 'tis very evident, that multitudes of the wise and prudent Ones of this World, are wholly eaten up with their Lusts, as the choicest Trees are devour'd by Caterpillars. John 7. 48.

4. See the reason, why weak Christians more stedfastly adhere to Christ, his Ways and Truths, in times of danger, than the wise and prudent. This saving Revelation of Divine Things, fixes and establishes their Hearts, and keeps them faster in the Faith than others can be held by meer dry Reason and Naked Arguments; so, that tho they are none of the great Scholars of the World, nor able to answer the specious Arguments of subtil Hereticks, yet 'tis not possible that all the craft and policy of Hell should finally deceive them. For they that are thus taught of God, have a spiritual Sense and Judgment to discern between Good and Evil; they inwardly. Mat. 24. 24.

1 John 2. 20,
21, 27.

ly know, and have a Witness within themselves of the truth of what this *Union* hath taught them. And therefore, as all Creatures, Plants as well as Animals, have a natural instinct whereby they draw to them what is proper for their Preservation and Nourishment, but avoid what is destructive to them: So these Persons to whom God hath spiritually reveal'd his Truths, have a supernatural Instinct whereby they turn aside from pernicious Errors, and unmovably retain the great Things of the Gospel with a mighty Relish and favour. They can't be beaten out of that Truth which hath been so plainly discover'd; they know these things to be great Realities, that have made such a deep Impression on their Hearts; and tho they can't learnedly dispute, they can courageously die for them rather than deny them. They will not be disputed out of them, no more than a Man will be persuaded that Honey is not sweet, which his Senses tell him is so; tho some Sophistical Arguments may be propounded against it, which he has not skill enough to answer. This Divine Knowledge, like polished Armour, adorns them in the sight of God, and defends them from the fiery Darts of wicked Men.

1 Luke 14. 21.

v. 23.

5. *See what the faithful Ministers of Christ must expect, and not be discouraged at it.* They are the poor only, that for the most part will receive Us and our Message: And 'tis no very great Service that we do our Master or his Interest, by bringing in such as these. But yet, tho they are the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, (such as we can pick up in the *Streets and Lanes*, or gather up by the *High-ways or Hedges*,) he refuses not them for his Table, nor will he be angry with us, unless it be, because his House is not filled with them. For our comfort, if we are but faithful in our Work, we shall be a sweet favour to God in those that are saved; tho they are but inferiour Persons; and in those that perish too, tho they are the great and honourable Ones of the Earth.

6. Hence

6. Hence I infer, *we should not idolize the greatest, nor condemn the meanest.* This is what the Apostle reproves; and to take Men off from it, he propounds this Question to their serious consideration, *Hearken, my beloved Brethren,* James 2. 1, 2, *hath not God chosen the poor of this World, rich in Faith,* 3, 4, 5. *and Heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?* 'Tis great Folly not to prefer a rough Diamond before a counterfeit Stone, tho curiously cut and set to the greatest advantage. We should not judge according to outward Appearance; for those that seem but little in our Eyes, may be, and frequently are, of mighty value; as the Stars that look like small Sparks in the Skies only, are in truth, very great and glorious Bodies.

2 Use. *Exhort.* To those from whom these things are hid; and those to whom they are revealed.

1. *To those from whom these things are hid;* chiefly the Wise and Prudent, tho not excluding Persons of a lower Station.

1. *Be not proud of nor satisfied with any Wisdom or Knowledge, while the great things of God are not savingly understood by you.* Some that have drunk as largely at those Fountains as any of you, have solemnly professed, they have found more sweetness and satisfaction of Soul, in one drop of a Spiritual Knowledge of Divine Mysteries, than in a whole Ocean of other Learning. They have looked on the deepest insight into all other things, to be, in comparison of this, but as congealed Drops of Water that may look bright and pleasing, but 'tis to Children and Fools; but this, this alone hath been the Pearl of great Price in their account. All human Wisdom and Knowledge, tho useful and valuable in its due Place and Order, yet is but like an Eye of Chrystal in the Head of a blind Man, which may hide his Deformity from the observation of his Neighbours, but can't direct him one step in the way wherein he ought to go. The Devils have as much and more of this than the best of us, and

and yet are the most miserable of all Gods Creatures. Why will you highly value your selves on the account of that, which leaves you in as bad a Condition as those wretched Apostate Spirits, and in a worse State than the most ignorant Man that hath a spiritual Understanding of heavenly Things? If you have no more than this, you shall perish at last for lack of Knowledge. For at the last Day, it shall fare with those curious Wits that are ignorant of God and Christ, as with carved Statues about a House that is set on Fire; down they drop into the Flames, and are consumed, there being none at hand to pluck them out.

2. *Seriously meditate on the deplorable State of those from whom these things are hid.* 'Tis a sad thing when God hides common Wisdom and Prudence from Men, as to the Affairs of this Life. VVhen God infatuates, 'tis a sign he intends to destroy. VVhen *Hamans* Face was cover'd with a Cloth, he was near his Execution. VVhen God throws a Veil over the Face of Mens Minds, and hides from them the things that belong to their Peace, they are on the very Borders of ruin. 'Tis sad to be given up to judicial Blindness as to any Objects; but to be so as to Divine Mysteries, so as to see no Glory nor Beauty in them, is the worst of all. *If our Gospel be hid, 'tis hid from them that are lost*; they are lost Men indeed, and undone Creatures, unless infinite Mercy speedily give them an Heart to perceive, to whom such a Blindness hath happened.

2 Cor. 4. 3.

3. If you are *wise and prudent*, be provoked unto a godly Jealousie, by those that are comparatively a foolish People; be not out-stript in matters of the greatest Moment, by those that in other things are so much below you.

If you are *inferiour* Persons, let not your meanness discourage you; seeing of such as you is the Kingdom of Heaven. Princes on their Coronation days use to scatter rich Medals among the common People; so doth Christ these Gifts of his. Do not you lose them for want of striving for them.

4. *Renounce*

4. Renounce all your Wisdom and Learning which you really have, or fancy you are possessed of. If any Man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a Fool that he may be wise. 1 Cor. 1. 19.

II. To those to whom these things are revealed.

1. Be humble. Flesh and Blood hath not revealed these things to you. Had not the Dew of Heaven fallen upon you, you had still been dry Trees and withered Branches. Out of free rich undeserved Grace, to you it is given of God to know these Mysteries; to others it is not given; be not proud and lofty as thou did not know your selves. Mat. 13. 11.

2. Rejoyce and give thanks. If you are wise and prudent, adore that Sovereign Grace that stepped out of it's usual Rode to meet with thee; what art thou better than others that sate as high as thou dost, that God should single thee out to anoint thee with this Oyl above thy Fellows, and thine Equals, whom he generally overlooks? If you are meaner Persons; what are you that so rich a Treasure should be put into such an earthen Vessel? Stones should not hold their peace, but cry out aloud with the voice of Joy and Praise, when they are turned into Children of Abraham. Holy Men in all Ages have admired and adored this distinguishing Grace. Judas saith to him, (not Iscariot) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thy self to us and not to the World? Luke 19. 48. John 14. 22. The Holy Ghost takes care that we should not mistake the Person that was thus affected with these special Discoveries. It was a Judas, but not Iscariot; not that vile Traytor, not that Son of Perdition: No, it was another kind of Person, a better Man than he, tho one of the same Name. Such Men know not the sweetness of that Wine they never tasted of; and therefore admire not the goodness of the Master of the Feast, in the distribution of it. Christ rejoyced and gave thanks, for the Revelation of these things to others; and will not you do it for the discovery of them to your selves? Had you the Tongue of Angels or Power over Devils, you would not have so great cause of Rejoycing and singing Praises as you

you now have, because Gods Law is written on your Hearts and your Names in Heaven.

3. *Envy not the excellent Gifts of others that are strangers to the grace of God in truth.* For you have the better part. Tho the surface of the Field appear mean and barren, yet the rich Mines contained in the Bowels of it, render it exceeding more valuable than another Soil, that is Fat and Flourishing.

4. *Endeavour to grow and improve in this saving Knowledge.* Your Minds are not yet open'd so wide as they may be, to receive the highest sight and sense of these things; no more than a Flower is full-blown in one day, but insensibly cleaves its Hood, and gradually opens it self to our view. Spiritual Understanding, like the natural One, should come on by little and little; and the Sons of God, like the Children of Men, be daily growing up in Wisdom and Stature.

5. *Long for Heaven, where your Knowledge shall be completed.* 'Tis with us here below, as with a Man that walks in a cloudy Night, that makes a hard shift to perceive first one Star, and by and by two or three more; but still there is a vast number of them which he cannot discern. Something we know, and gradually make some few fresh Discoveries; but how great a Portion is hid from us? Whereas in Heaven, all that Ignorance shall be removed, that now hangs about us like the Relicks of a broken Cloud on the top of a Mountain: All that Dust shall be blown out of our Eyes, that at present obstructs our Sight. The Sacred Volumes have many glorious things written in them, which we can't yet discern, because they are according to the ancient Form of Books, roll'd up; which, tho God be gradually unfolding, yet 'tis in Heaven only that they shall be fully stretched out, & lye all plain and open before us. There shall not be a greater and more glorious Change of the dull Matter of these vile Bodies, than in our dark Souls when we reach Heaven; both shall shine clear as the Light at Noon-day. Our Notions here are broken, confus'd and imperfect, like the rude Images in the
Fancies

Fancies of them that dream; which we our selves shall *define* upon our awaking in that Morning, when we shall behold Gods Face, and be satisfied with the Vision of him as well as with our likeness to him. Ps. 73. 20.
Ps. 17. 15.

6. *Follow the Example of Christ in an humble Adoration of the good Pleasure of God, as to those things which may seem very strange to you.* I might press this as to his Laws, Ordinances and Providences. When you meet with many hard Chapters in the Book of Nature, Scripture and Providence, which you are not able to read and understand; don't cavil and wrangle; lay your Hands on your Mouths; or if you do open them, say no more than thus, with the greatest lowliness of Mind. *Even so Father, for so it pleaseth thee. O the depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* Rom. 11. 33.

Lastly, *Lay out your selves to the utmost, for the advancing of Gods Honour and Interest.* This is the Duty of all Men; and in a peculiar manner, of Christian Magistrates that have been taught of God. And the fewer of the great Ones of this World, are on Christs side; so much the more zealous and active should those few be. You cannot indeed, *give of your Oyl* unto the foolish Virgins; yet you may reflect the *Light* of it in good Works, shining before Men, and induce them to glorify your heavenly Father. And if you do not do this, it had been better for you, you had still continued under the *Bushel*, remained in your former Obscurity, than to be thus advanced on a high Hill. 'Tis a serious Question that will e're long be put to all of you, by one that hath Authority to ask it, and *will* have an Answer; seeing I have done so much for you more than for others, *what have you done for me more than others?* And I hope, you will betimes bethink your selves what Reply to make, and labour to be ready furnished with a very good one. If you behave your selves like wise and faithful Magistrates, the Power you have now in your Hands, and the Grace of God *ruling in your Hearts and*

Lions, while you rule over Men; will exceedingly recommend Religion to others, and set it off with great Advantage. Divine Wisdom and Knowledge in an Assembly of Men in Authority, are like flaming Tapers in a Branch of burnished Gold, whose glittering and sparkling Substance returns Light as well as receives it; sheds a Glory on the Room where it hangs, and at once draws and dazzles the Eyes of all both far and near.

I have said ye are Gods; but be not like the useles Idols of the Heathens, that are empty and hollow within, that only fill up the void Places where they stand; and tho worshipped by the People, have neither Eyes to see and discern between Good and Evil, nor Hands to work Righteousness. Tho you are a sort of inferior Deities, yet remember you must *die like Men*; so live therefore in your present Stations, *as the Children of the most High*, that you may not die in a civil or a natural Sense, *as a Fool dieth*. Encourage Religion; punish and suppress that Profanation of Gods Name and Sabbaths, that Debauchery and Immorality which to this day walk too open and bare-faced in the midst of us. Steadily own the Truths of God wherein you have been instructed. Plead his Cause in your Places; maintain, promote, encourage his Interest; *not that of any single Party among us*. This is the Duty of Magistrates as well as Divines. For you also are the Ministers of God. In our Saviours glorious Transfiguration on the Mount, not only *Elias* the Prophet, but *Moses* also, the Ruler of the People, appeared and waited on him. Christ and his Interest will never be lifted up on high, nor shine in their Lustre and Glory in the World, till both these are with him. If you resolve to be so, you must expect Reproaches, and despise them. Let all the Revilings which Men pour out against you, be to you as Snow to the Ground, that comes down upon the Earth *like Wool*; soft and easie, making no noise nor disturbance where it falls. Whatever a few Fools may say against you, this will be your Wisdom and Honour in the sight of the whole Nation, and redound to your eternal Advantage. For if you do these things, then you, to whom *it is given to know the Mysteries of his Kingdom*, to you also shall it be given to behold the Glory, and enjoy the Rewards of it. When not only yours and all other Civil Power shall be at an end; but the Mediatorial Kingdom of God-Redeemer too shall cease, and the Father be all in all; you shall be advanced to Thrones of Glory near his right Hand, where there are Rivers of Joy for you to drink of, and Pleasures that flow for evermore.

